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Treatley kitchen to find Mary as robust and as energetic as before.

Mrs. Treatley burned with cold horror the following morning that her strategy had failed. She sat down at once and composed a telegram to her husband in Washington. *Quickly* she signed it in two days. Charles K. Treatley remained eight interviews and six conferences and those cocktail parties, and rushed to the airport with a brief case full of priorities. Five hours later he plunged into her upstairs sitting room, breathless and shaking with anxiety.

"My dear, my dear!" he exclaimed.

"What has happened?"

"Mrs. Treatley sat her face grimly. "Mary is about to marry some railroad potent and leave this house," she said, and I want you to stop it at once."

"You're joking," he said. "I've flown all the way from Washington. I've died a thousand deaths wondering — You wouldn't swerve when I called long distance — And now —"

"Charles K. Treatley," said Miss Treatley, "I am not joking. If you think for one minute that I am going to take care of this great beast of a house of yours — this ten-room manse — myself, if you think I am going to put my hair up under a lace cap and —"

"Now just what the devil can I do," asked Mr. Treatley. "If Mary wants to get married to somebody? I should say that is her own business, and none of mine or yours."

"You are ordinarily a very reasonable person, Charles," said Mrs. Treatley. "This is nothing compared to some of the problems you have solved. If you'll only give it some thought, I am sure you will find a way out."

So Mr. Treatley impatiently paced the room while his wife talked. "But, know," he murmured, "even if I could think of some way to make her marry this fellow Spent, how could you be sure she wouldn't leave us then?"

"I'm sure she wouldn't because I'm sure," said Mrs. Treatley. "I am sure they would settle here. After all, Mary has a sitting room and bedrooms and bath downstairs and Mr. Spent is not the type of person to fly off to the ends of the earth with her. He's quiet and respectable, and a very nice man."

"Yes," said Mr. Treatley, "and, judging by a letter I got yesterday from the office here, it also appears he is just about the loudest low driver an ever heard. You have to think, kitten, what the transit system and the people who patronize it have got up with to keep Mary in this house. He ought to have been dead the day he went to work, and he would have been fired if I had known how incompetent he was."

"If he is fired," said Mrs. Treatley, "you will bitterly regret it, Charles K. Treatley!"

"All right, all right," he said. "Now tell me all about it again. Spare me none of the least details. Hereby it is stated, the United States is fighting for its life, two hundred people a day are calling my office in Washington for appointments, and I have to sit here and think up a way to marry your maid to one of my low drivers!" He subsided into a thoughtful silence.

"What are you thinking, dear?" she asked gently.

"I was wondering," he said, "how Roosevelt would handle this."

Four hands and nine cups of coffee later, Mr. Treatley rose sharply from his chair. "Why, of course!" he said. "Of course!"

"Of course what?" said Mrs. Treatley. "Kitten," he said, "didn't you tell me that Mary said—didn't you say that Spent pretends he is running a train when he operates his bus, and that he spends much of his time at the end of the line, watching the miniature railway? Well, now, look. Just suppose Spent had some other kind of work—suppose we actually made it possible for him to run a train? Wouldn't he likely be more self-motivated?"

"I won't have him running off to some railroad," said Mrs. Treatley flatly.

"Old Charles Smith out at the park," mused Mr. Treatley, "is due to retire any time now. We could give Spent his job. Kitten, to keep you happy, I would even willingly add another ten thousand feet to that miniature railway and throw in a tunnel and two new paper-mâché mountains."

"I don't see that it would do any good whatever," said Mrs. Treatley. "What I want is to have Mary and him married."

"It's the best I can do," said Mr. Treatley. "And now I'm going to bed. Tomorrow morning I'll run him over with Spent and tell him. After that it's his game, not mine."

The transit executive rose at seven, went down to the dining room to find the curtains still drawn. He called over the house phone for Mary, but there was no response.

"The girl is sleeping in," he decided. "Kitten is right. Therefore I must leave it all shot to guess. Something's got to be done."

He boarded the bus and was warmly greeted by Herman's nephew, most of whom were his personal friends. After they had been underway perhaps five minutes, Mr. Treatley settled forward and quietly engaged the driver in conversation. Herman failed to recognize him at first and pointed to the sign AT.

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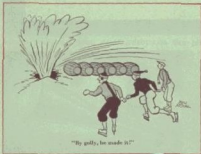
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